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ESSAY

The Absent Liberal

Liberals dominated the intellectual landscape in the 50s and 60s, but more recently they have become an endangered species -- squeezed out by the identity politics of the left, which holds that caste is and should be the fundamental axis of Indian society, and of the right, with political Islam the real if unacknowledged model for political Hinduism.

RAMACHANDRA GUHA

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If a modern Diogenes were to hunt out for Indians with his lantern in these days, he would be sure to come across fervid Hindus, bigoted Muslims and fanatical souls deeply engrossed with the problem of tirelessly finding out how unjustly their own particular community was being treated, and he would have to ask in sorrow: "Where are the Indians".

– Syed Abdullah Brelvi [1]

Not to give way at a critical point to the temptation of exaggeration – some dramatically extremist doctrine which rivets the eyes of one's own countrymen and the world, and brings followers and undying fame and a sense of glory and personal fulfilment – not to yield to this, but to seek to find the truth in the face of scorn and threats from both sides – left and right, Westernisers and traditionalists – that seems to me to be the rarest form of heroism.

– Isaiah Berlin, writing about Rabindranath Tagore [2]

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A Missing Portrait

The campus of the University of Pune used to be the summer home of the governor of Bombay. Expansive and green, dotted with lovely old ficus trees, the property's centre-piece is a grand double-storeyed stone building. This was once the governor's residence and is now the university's Senate Hall. The signs of decolonisation are everywhere. In the wood-panelled conference room, the portraits of governors and viceroys have been covered over with red curtains. The only paintings now exposed look out over the main stairway. These are new – or relatively new – and number four in all. Their subjects are Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Bhimrao Ambedkar and Jyotiba Phule.

One can understand these choices without necessarily endorsing them. For these men were all charismatic and influential, and all had strong Pune connections. They were writers of distinction in their native Marathi, but also public figures who imposed their stamp on the history of modern India. Each, in his own way, embodied the fusion of national relevance and regional pride that our universities seek to represent. There is, nonetheless a striking absence, of a man who was both politician and social reformer, both scholar and teacher, both Maharashtrian and Indian, and who lived and died in this city. Why does the Senate Hall of the University of Pune have no space for a portrait of Gopal Krishna Gokhale?

II

Life of the Mind in India: A Brief History

In 1930, well before the University of Pune was founded, a social science institute was established in the city. Its prime mover, D R Gadgil, had taken an M Litt from Cambridge, writing a thesis on the industrial evolution of India. (It was an outstanding thesis, which remained in print for 70-years after its first publication.) Unlike other Oxbridge graduates of his generation he had no desire to enter the Indian Civil Service. On his return he taught in a college in Surat, before persuading his father-in-law, R R Kale, to help finance a research institute. The Servants of India Society also provided support, in the shape of a slice of real estate under its control. As it happened, the home of the society's founder stood on this land. One suspects that it was not this alone which suggested to Gadgil that he name his new venture the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics.

D R Gadgil was an intellectual of rare ability and self-confidence. The range of his own research was impressive: at various times he did important work on planning, economic history, and the sociology of business communities. His instincts and orientation were 'interdisciplinary' before that term became known or fashionable. Likewise, he was a public intellectual before public intellectualism: he was one of the founders of the cooperative movement in Maharashtra. He was not lacking in courage, either. Once, he even took on Mahatma Gandhi. In 1946, Gadgil and A D Gorwala were the two members of an expert committee appointed by the government of Bombay to recommend measures to assure a fairer distribution of food in a time of scarcity. Gandhi thought the market would do the trick; Gadgil and Gorwala insisted that the situation called for state intervention. As the columnist D F Karaka wrote:

It would be difficult to find a truer picture of all that is best in the ancient Indian

SHORT TAKES

away Tejpal computer (CFO). One even dropped names of some senior politicians and threatened to make calls, an investigator said.

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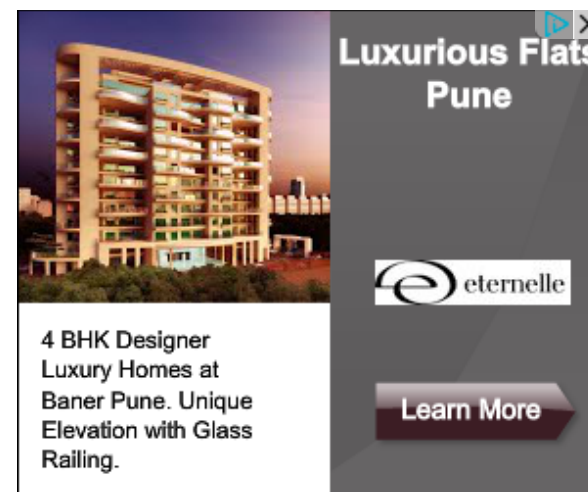
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tradition than Gadgil. A slim, gaunt man, argumentative and aggressive on the right occasions, full of courage and with a wisdom grounded in deep knowledge of both theory and facts, Gadgil had devoted himself for many years to the building up of a true school of politics and economics, eschewing all profitable pursuit. On occasion after occasion he had turned down offers of employment by the government. He joined the board primarily because he felt the situation in the country was so critical that a right lead was essential and without the right lead it might become disastrous.[3]

One might cavil at the use of the term 'ancient' – if anything, Gadgil represented the best of the 'modern' Indian tradition – but otherwise this tribute was deeply felt and richly merited. When Gadgil founded the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics he was not yet 30. He was precocious and so was his institute. It was, to my knowledge, the first social science institute in India, combining pure with applied research. (Intriguingly, it placed 'politics' before 'economics', thus reversing the order preferred by, for instance, the London School of Economics, that other experiment in the marriage of knowledge with the public weal.) The singularity of Gadgil's achievement is still insufficiently recognised. Our histories of intellectuals somehow assume that all good or meaningful things first happened in Bengal. In this instance, however, what Pune thought of in 1930 Kolkata was to think of at least a year later. For it was only in the last weeks of 1931 that P C Mahalanobis founded the Indian Statistical Institute in that city.

Mahalanobis was also a Cambridge man of wide-ranging interests. A physicist by training, he shared Gadgil's appreciation of fields other than his own. It was said that he knew the works of Rabindranath Tagore better than the poet himself. To have a department of literature, alas, fell well outside the mandate of his new institute. Nonetheless, in time that mandate was stretched to successfully incorporate anthropology, economics, and biology, apart from statistics and mathematics.

In a recent column in EPW, offered ironically as an appreciation of D R Gadgil, AM has suggested that the main difference between Gadgil and Mahalanobis was that the Pune man was more 'feudal' in his orientation. He reaches this conclusion on the grounds that the Bengali scholar counted more Marxists among his friends and colleagues.[4] The facts suggest otherwise. Gadgil may have dominated his colleagues, intellectually, but Mahalanobis ran his own institute exactly like a personal fiefdom: among the chapter titles of Ashok Rudra's biography are 'The Big Banyan' and 'The Great Dictator'. It was this manifest authoritarianism that led to the departure from his institute of that remarkable British scientist who had taken Indian nationality, J B S Haldane.[5]

The more salient distinctions between Gadgil and Mahalanobis lie in the realm of politics rather than personality. Gadgil was a classical liberal, devoted to democracy and human rights. Like Gokhale he sought to bring about change incrementally. And while not discounting the role of the state, like Gokhale again he placed great emphasis on voluntary and collective civic action. Mahalanobis, on the other hand, was more enamoured of the transformative powers of the state. Hence, perhaps, his affinities to Marxism and his strong sympathies for Soviet-style planning. The one was content with identifying the social conditions for incremental change; the other was of the "conviction that qualitative problems could find quantitative resolution, that uncertainty in all walks of life could be reduced and mastered by the use of statistical models".

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To the Gokhale Institute in Pune and the ISI in Calcutta one must add at least three other initiatives begun in colonial times. There was the Bombay School of Economics and Sociology, with teachers like C N Vakil and G S Ghurye and students like M N Dantwala and M N Srinivas. There was the Deccan College in Pune, with its exciting programmes in anthropology and archaeology led by Irawati Karve and H D Sankhalia. And there was Lucknow University, which from the 1930s had a faculty of some calibre in the humanities: notably, the 'prabashi' trio of Radhakamal Mukerjee, D P Mukerji and D N Majumdar. Nor should one forget individuals, such as N K Bose in Calcutta, who rose above their institutions.[7]

After 1947 these older initiatives were joined by plenty of others. New universities sprung up all across India, each with its departments of economics, sociology, history, and the like. Particularly influential in this regard was the Delhi School of Economics, founded by V K R V Rao in 1948, with a department of sociology added 10-years later. Also to be noted are two Delhi-based initiatives that focused exclusively on research: the Institute of Economic Growth, set up by V K R V Rao in 1958, and the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, founded by Rajni Kothari, which began life in 1962.

Accompanying the birth and growth of these institutions was the birth and growth of independent-minded research journals in history and the social sciences. The ISI and the Gokhale Institute had published their own journals – *Samkhya* and *Artha Vijnana*, respectively – but by the 1960s these had been joined (and in some respects supplanted) by the new entrants on the block: *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, *Sociological Bulletin*, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, and *Economic Weekly* (renamed in 1966 as *Economic and Political Weekly*).

Much of the work published in these journals was of a high quality, and much of it was addressed to the urgent issues of the day: political development, economic growth, poverty alleviation, the career and course of nationalism, the future of caste. My concern here, however, is not principally with content but with form. Reading the back issues of these journals for the 1950s and the 1960s, one reaches the surprising conclusion that the world of Indian intellectuals was then surprisingly indifferent to radical thought. Extremisms of right and left were shunned. There were absolutely no saffron intellectuals, and not many who were flaming red either. Rather, it was the middle ground which was capacious and well colonised.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* offers three definitions of a liberal thinker: one who is "open minded, not prejudiced"; one who "favours individual liberty, free trade, and moderate political and social reform"; and one who regards "many traditional beliefs as dispensable, invalidated by modern thought or liable to change". Of these three criteria, perhaps two-and-two-thirds applied to the professors and scholars of newly independent India. The exception being the idea of free trade, which was rejected in favour of the then regnant 'swadeshi' or import-substituting model of economic development.

There are more things on earth than can be contained in the *Concise*-or indeed *Complete-Oxford Dictionary*, and to the above listing must be added at least three other founding features of Indian liberalism. First, while there was a critical attitude towards the past, there was also a, sometimes extreme, hopefulness about the future. Liberals were convinced that the idealism

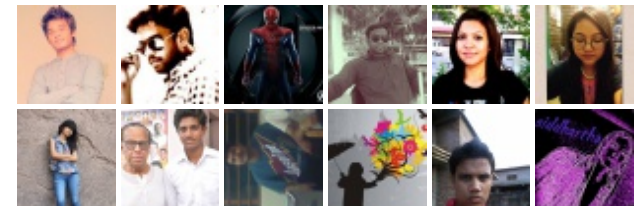
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nurtured by the national movement would find constructive expression in free India, with scientists, civil servants, politicians and scholars working unitedly to eliminate poverty, disease, and illiteracy, thus allowing India and Indians to take their place with honour in the modern world.

Second, there was an implicit and somewhat unselfconscious patriotism. Intellectuals might go overseas to study or learn, but they would return to help in the task of 'nation building'. The liberal intellectuals of the 1950s were patriotic to a degree the contemporary post-nationalist might find embarrassing. However, the best among them took care not to appear partisan, that is, not to identify with any one social/religious group, political party, or politician.

Third, Indian liberals paid close attention to the promotion of institutions of civil society such as the law courts and universities, and to the fostering of impartial, rule-bound procedures within them.

True, one could recognise subtle differences of approach and emphasis. There were the liberals qua liberals – such as D R Gadgil – who were unwavering in their commitment to democracy and human rights, and who in the cold war would have tilted slightly towards the west. There were the fellow travelling liberals – such as P C Mahalanobis – who were enchanted by the Soviet Union – particularly by its economic model – and who thought that despite its faults it was more to be trusted than its North American adversary. And there were what I would call the 'traditionalist' liberals – such as the Bombay sociologist G S Ghurye – who thought that institutions such as family and community were not to be sacrificed in the march to modernity.

These three groups had, however, a shared idea of India. This included a commitment to democracy – that is, a multi-party system, regular elections, a free press, and an independent judiciary – to the creation of a more just and equitable society, if by incremental means, and to inter-religious harmony, this guaranteed by state neutrality in affairs of faith. Whether left, right, or traditionalist, the overwhelming majority of Indian intellectuals were, as I have defined the term here, 'liberal'.

It is important to recognise that Indian liberalism was a *sensibility* rather than a *theory*, a product of empirical engagement rather than an elaboration of principles laid down in canonical texts. Burke, Mill, Tocqueville, or Smith; the thinkers to whom western scholars turn for definitions or understandings of liberalism were largely unknown in India or at least largely unread. Rather, liberalism was a response to experience, an intellectual practice that flowed from the peculiarities of independent India, a sensibility that seemed in tune with the heterogeneity of its cultures and the commitment to democracy of its ruling class.

The flowering of Indian liberalism cannot be set apart from the political context in which it operated. It was, in the best sense of the word, Nehruvian. Jawaharlal Nehru understood that in a society as poor and divided as his, the task of nation building had necessarily to be inclusive rather than exclusive. He thus wished to take everyone along with him: Muslims, Hindus, capitalists, workers, tribals, peasants, Hindiwallahs and 'Madrasis'.

In his autobiography Nehru wrote of the Servants of India Society that while he respected their commitment, their work "might not be on wholly right lines". "Its politics", he remarked, "were

too moderate for me".[8] At this time Nehru tended also to display a certain impatience with the views of Gokhale's most influential admirer, Mahatma Gandhi. But the arrogant and impatient rebel was to be tamed and humanised by office. As prime minister of this bafflingly complex land he learnt to appreciate the beauties of compromise.

It is now fashionable to posit Gandhi against Nehru, but in two signal respects the disciple came to follow the master: in his preference for consensus over conflict, and in his deep abhorrence of violence in thought and deed. As he once told the French writer-politician, Andre Malraux, the greatest challenge before him, and India, was how to "build a just society by just means".

While the British were still in India Nehru sometimes spoke and sounded like a utopian revolutionary. But as a prime minister he worked always for "moderate political and social reform". Now he, in turn, attracted the scorn of the young and hot-tempered. The hard core Marxist deplored his compromises with capitalists and landlords, the Jan Sanghi his desire to effect a rapprochement with Indian Muslims and with Pakistan. Reds and saffronites alike could not understand Nehru's respect for non-violence, for the norms and procedures of democracy. At this time there were not many extremists of either kind. The vast majority of Indian intellectuals were liberals: left liberals, centre liberals, and right liberals. And they all admired, even worshipped Nehru.

III

Threat from the Left

Although Nehru's death, in 1964, did not lead immediately to the decline or disappearance of liberalism, it must in retrospect be viewed as an important factor that set in motion the slide. Lal Bahadur Shastri came and went, and then Indira Gandhi took over as prime minister. Although her term was interrupted by one three-year spell in opposition, all told she held office almost as long as her father did. Long enough, at any rate, to decisively influence the trajectory of intellectual life in this country.

Unlike her father, Indira Gandhi was no liberal. She cultivated committed intellectuals much as she cultivated committed judges and civil servants. Scholars, including some very fine ones, were lured to her side by the hope of using the instruments of the state to promote their models of teaching and research. Not coincidentally most of these scholars were Marxist or Marxisant.

Till the 1960s, Marxism had little serious influence in the Indian academy. Marxists enjoyed greater visibility and power in the cultural realm: in literature, drama, and, especially, film. To be sure, there were some able scholars of this persuasion, such as A R Desai, Irfan Habib, and above all, D D Kosambi. But not many more. Things changed rather swiftly in the late 1960s and thereafter. One important influence was Mao's China, whose alleged successes, economic as well as cultural, were widely (and uncritically) bruited about. The attractions of China were reinforced by the activities of the Naxalites, by the young men and women who might have been lacking in tactical sense but certainly not in bravery.

China and the Naxalites helped enhance the appeal of Marxism among Indian intellectuals. A second source of influence was the efflorescence of western Marxist thought in the 1960s. The

books and essays of British historians such as E P Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm attracted a younger generation of scholars in a manner that liberal historiography could not. Their uncovering of the hidden histories of British workers and peasants inspired Indians to uncover the hidden histories of our own workers and peasants. Meanwhile, the now ready availability in English of the work of continental philosophers such as Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci sensitised an Indian audience to more subtle understandings of Marxism, whereby as much attention was paid to power and culture as to the economy.

A third factor that aided the spread of Marxism operated from within the state itself. This was the left cabal around Indira Gandhi; men such as P N Haksar, S Nurul Hasan and D P Dhar. These Soviet sympathisers worked to impose their own, so-called 'progressive' model of scholarship, sometimes founding new institutions for the purpose.

Finally, the increasing influence of Marxism in the academy was enabled by the accessibility of relevant texts. The works of the master and his associate, Engels, were available in very cheap English editions brought out by Moscow's Progress Publishers. The more discerning could instead buy the Penguin selections from Marx's oeuvre, these freshly translated from the German and edited and introduced by the leading European scholars in the field.

The rise of intellectual Marxism in India was most manifest in two cities: in Calcutta, an epicentre of the Naxalite movement and a bigger stronghold still of the Communist Party of India (Marxist); and in the capital, Delhi, where Marxist scholars built up a base in the Indian Council of Historical Research, the National Council of Educational Research and Training, and the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

By the mid to late 1970s, Marxism in all its varieties had emerged as a serious intellectual challenger to liberalism. It was seen by its adherents as youthful and energetic as compared to the enervated and pussyfooted liberal alternative. In the scholarly debates of the day – on the impact of colonialism, for example, or the role of the Congress or the origins of caste or the political system most appropriate for India – the student was presented with two competing interpretations, Marxist and non-Marxist. The Marxist insisted that caste was founded on inequalities in landholding (namely, that it was merely a surrogate for class); the liberal answered that ritual and ideational factors could not be so easily discounted. The Marxist was relentless in his criticisms of the exploitative character of British colonialism; the liberal sought to complicate the picture by drawing attention also to some of colonialism's indirect benefits, such as the building of roads and railways. The Marxist dismissed Gandhi's Congress as a landlord-capitalist alliance and non-violence as a diabolical strategy aimed at weaning the masses away from the revolutionary path; the liberal thought the Congress represented a genuine all-class anti-colonial movement whose belief in non-violence was morally guided. The Marxist dismissed Nehru's India as a 'bourgeois democracy' that would, sooner rather than later, be replaced by an authentic 'people's democracy'; the liberal allowed that Indian democracy was flawed but insisted that, as a political system, it was indubitably superior to authoritarianisms of left and right.[9]

Political Marxism in India is a curious mixture of dogmatic theory and latitudinarian practice. The CPM still worships Stalin and has enthusiastically supported the genocide of Tibetans and the massacre at Tiananmen Square. Yet their state governments have successfully promoted communal peace, and not one of the party's leaders has yet been indicted for corruption. The

Naxalites still swear a fealty to Mao and fetishise violence, yet they have worked heroically among the poorest of the poor, the dalits and adivasis ignored by other political groupings.[10]

Intellectual Marxism in India is likewise a strange mixture of grit and gold. Marxist historians of medieval and ancient India have done useful and sometimes pioneering work on agrarian structure, state power, and technological change. Marxist scholars of colonial India have paid valuable attention to disadvantaged social groups and to popular protest. Although their analyses have sometimes been crude and deterministic, Marxist historians have genuinely helped illuminate the past. But the contributions of Marxist economists and political scientists are less clear. In the universities and departments where they dominated, students were taught to distrust democracy and demonise the market, to exaggerate the achievements and underplay the failures of the Communist states spread across the globe.

However, it seems likely that the heyday of Marxist influence in the Indian university is past. The form of radicalism now dominant among scholars and students is what I shall call "the identity politics of the left". This is rooted in caste, which has historically been the principal axis of discrimination and inequality in Indian society. This tendency has two streams, which sometimes unite and sometimes diverge. The one stream is rooted in the dalits; its icon and role model being that remarkable scholar and social reformer, B R Ambedkar. The second stream draws on the mobilisation of backward castes; its intellectual forbears are various, from Phule in Maharashtra to Periyar in Tamil Nadu and Lohia in northern India. It is too early as yet to pass any judgment on these important new trends; but not too early perhaps to see that they are decisively different from what used to pass as Indian liberalism. The liberals worked for an India where caste would steadily lose its salience. The new identity politics, on the other hand, insists that caste is the central grid by which we must understand the present, and by which we must build our future.

There is then an 'old' left and a 'new' left', the one emanating from the Communist Parties and (in theory) class-based, the other a more recent development which is based on the axis of caste. In the politics of the day the two are natural allies, politically – as in the fitful attempts to forge a 'Third Front' – as well as intellectually, as in the 'anti-saffron' alliances carved out within universities and cultural groups.

IV

Threat from the Right

The economist Vinod Vyasulu once suggested to this writer that of the top hundred members of his profession in India, not one would like to ally himself with the Bharatiya Janata Party. There are no reputable Sangh parivar economists and, it must be said, no reputable saffron sociologists or anthropologists either. No social scientist of any achievement or credibility will be seen, dead or alive, with the BJP. The situation with regard to history-writing is only marginally different: perhaps two or three of the best hundred historians might be willing to be labelled as 'saffron'.

For the first 20 years of Indian independence the Sangh parivar was marginal politically and non-existent intellectually. Since then, it has made steady and sometimes spectacular progress in one sphere without gaining any ground in the other. Its political influence now is

completely disproportionate to its intellectual influence. This disparity can only be corrected by the use of state power, by force-feeding the public with ideas of history and politics that have no intellectual legitimacy or credibility. Hence the extraordinary attention always paid by saffron regimes to the writing and re-writing of history. An early taste of this came in 1977, when the Jan Sangh members of the Janata Party banned NCERT textbooks which offended their Hindutva sentiments. That was a mere gust compared with the storm now raised by the most proactive member of the present cabinet, the minister for education and culture, Murli Manohar Joshi.

M M Joshi knows that no reputable scholar shall willingly follow his party's line. No matter. In this vast country he can find enough men of dubious intellectual pedigree who are reliably

saffron in their political orientation. Since the BJP came to power in 1998, Joshi has put such men in positions of strategic influence in the University Grants Commission, in the ICHR and ICSSR, and the NCERT.

The threat to liberal scholarship from the right has been well publicised. But it has not, I believe, been adequately understood for what it is. Behind the education minister's initiatives lies a complex mixture of envy and frustration. For our secular state denies 'sants' and 'sadhus' the power enjoyed by religious figures in other lands. After the Babri masjid was demolished, one of the movement's leaders proclaimed their intention to make Ayodhya 'the Vatican of the Hindus'. The 'sarsanghchalaks' envy the Pope and his Cardinals for the hold they seem to enjoy over powerful Catholics. Fidel Castro has defied a succession of American presidents, but he went down on his knees to kiss the Pope's ring. But the Hindu chauvinists envy the 'mullahs' even more. In Catholic countries the business of politics is kept apart from religion. Not so in countries like Pakistan or Saudi Arabia, whose sheikhs and generals sometimes receive religious as well as political instruction from the mullahs.

Indeed, it is political Islam that is the real if unacknowledged model for political Hinduism. The parallel was first pointed out to me by the distinguished historian Dharma Kumar. In 1990, right in the middle of the Ayodhya campaign, she observed that the Sangh parivar wanted "to create an Islamic state – for Hindus".

In Islamic political theology non-Muslims are divided into two categories: the 'dhimmi', or people of the book, and the 'kafir' or infidel who worship more than one book and, worse, more than one god. In Islamic states the Christians and the Jews were allowed to live in peace, as long as they paid their taxes and did not demand a stake in the government. The vision of India upheld by the RSS appears to draw upon this medieval model. If Muslims and Christians are politically subservient and make loyalty to Bharat Mata part of their daily morning prayers, they will not be harassed by the Hindu.

In this model of politics the Hindus are the chosen ones. They are called upon to forget their distinctions of language and caste, to see themselves as a single, cohesive group that shall lay claim to the land of milk and honey that is their 'dar-es-salam': Mother India. Just as the assertions around caste are 'the identity politics of the left', the construction of a unified Hindu community constitutes "the identity politics of the right". Birth, rather than achievement or personal choice, is presumed to be the decisive and unchangeable essence of social life and intellectual understanding. The distance from liberalism could scarcely be greater.

V

Sites of Struggle

The great American critic Lionel Trilling once wrote of 'the adversary culture' of modern intellectuals. Those who chose the life of the mind, he argued, were likely to do battle with the establishment, and to reject a formal association with the state. This perhaps applied most of

all to creative writers – poets, novelists, playwrights – the best of whom have often stoutly resisted state sponsorship and state interference, the most courageous of whom have been dissenters in both fascist and communist dictatorships.

Trilling might have revised his dictum were he to have lived and worked in India. Here, writers have cheerfully accepted and even actively sought the patronage of the state. So have historians and social scientists. To be sure, they have fought amongst themselves for the spoils.

Consider thus the career of the Indian Council of Historical Research. This was set up in the 1970s as a nodal agency to direct and guide historical research. For something like a quarter-of-a-century it was dominated by scholars of Marxist persuasion. After M M Joshi took over as minister of education the Marxists were turfed out and replaced by men (I hesitate to use the term 'scholars') whose ideas were more congenial to his own.

A vocal critic of the old ICHR is Joshi's cabinet colleague, Arun Shourie. In a recent book he complained at some length of its ideological rigidity and at greater length of the monetary gains that accrued to its clients. The latter charge seems a bit excessive. The amounts allocated to favoured historians by the ICHR, as revealed by Shourie's research, are piffling: a few thousand rupees in most cases, here and there perhaps a lakh. This is the kind of money that Shourie's political colleagues would reckon to make in less than a day.

But the charge of intellectual inflexibility will not go away. For a group of left historians long controlled the ICHR; by their own standards they were non-partisan, as they allowed into their fold those sympathetic to the CPI as well as those sympathetic to the CPM. A few 'pink' fellow travellers were also admitted. However, they discriminated against those scholars whose point of view was at odds with Marxism. The books of the leftists were translated or prescribed, whereas the work of such outstanding (but non-Marxist) historians as Ashin Dasgupta and Sanjay Subrahmanyam was ignored. Research grants and foreign trips were also within the patronage of the ruling clique; these were likewise allotted to friends and comrades on the left.

The overall record of the ICHR under leftist rule has to be measured not by how much money was spent – or mis-spent – but rather by the kind of historical research it fostered – or did not foster. Compare the Council's own journal, *The Indian Historical Review*, with the independently run *Indian Economic and Social History Review* – the one had a decent essay perhaps every third issue, whereas the other was consistently first-rate. Think of the major historical fields to have emerged in India since the 1970s – subaltern studies, women's history, legal history, cultural history, and environmental history. These have all been developed by scholars who have had no truck whatsoever with the ICHR. Indeed, at least two of these fields – subaltern studies and environmental history – have been openly mocked by the party Marxists who

served as successive chairmen of the ICHR. The progress of Indian history in the past three decades or so suggests that the best work has been done outside the ambit of formal state patronage. Perhaps, as Rudrangshu Mukherjee has suggested, Clio prefers to be an anarchist. [11]

In a speech delivered at the Kolkata meeting of the Indian History Congress in January 2001, Amartya Sen made a not-so-veiled attack on the saffronisation of history by the men who now rule India. History would become 'bunk', he said, if its writing was "manoeuvred to suit a slanted agenda in contemporary politics". He deplored the "arbitrary augmentation of a narrowly sectarian view of India's past", and called instead for a model of historical research that was based on "heterodoxy and methodological independence". [12]

The choice of venue was ironic, for prominent among the audience that heard Amartya Sen that day were scholars who have manipulated history for their political ends, who have promoted a model of research and teaching that denies heterodoxy and independence. Indeed – although he seems to be unaware of this himself – Sen's strictures apply with equal force to orthodox Marxist understandings of Indian history. A younger scholar has recently written with feeling and insight about the kind of history promoted by Marxist historians when they were in positions of power and authority. She observes of Delhi University in the 1970s that "we did not care to seriously read the work of older scholars, R C Majumdar for example, because it used to be fashionable to routinely dismiss them as 'reactionary'. A studious silence was also maintained about scholarship that was contrary to the ideas of powerful 'left' historians. None of us had any illusions that the history we were taught as part of the official curriculum was tailored to a significant extent by larger agendas". [13]

The functioning of the ICHR through the 1970s and the 1980s was in marked contrast to the functioning of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, a publicly-funded body set up at about the same time and housed in the same building at 35, Feroze Shah Road. This sharing of office space should not obscure the differences. Thus the activities of the ICHR were centralised in Delhi. It was from the capital and by the capital's historians that grants were given out for research, or decisions taken as to which books were to be published or translated. The ICSSR, on the other hand, has functioned in a more decentralised fashion. The bulk of its annual budget goes towards maintaining a chain of research institutes spread across the country. Some older centres, such as the Gokhale Institute and the Centre for Study of Developing Societies, were adopted by the ICSSR; but numerous new centres were also set up. The choice of centres was mindful of regional balance. Almost all the states of the union now have a functioning social science institute, whose funding is typically shared between the ICSSR and the respective state government.

A second difference, not unconnected to the first, is that the ICSSR has never been dominated by any particular cabal. The institutes in different states have scholars of all political persuasions, including those who are non-political and anti-political. Even at the apex, the officers in control have been representative of the wider trends in Indian scholarship. Among the member-secretaries of the ICSSR have been T N Madan, who is sceptical of Marxism; R Radhakrishna, who like most economic theorists does not have strong political preferences; and D N Dhanagare, who is moderately left-wing: that is, pink without being red. (All three are highly capable and respected scholars.) The roots of this constructive catholicism are to be found perhaps in the person of the council's first member-secretary, J P Naik, a man of great

integrity who respected good scholarship wherever and by whomever it was done. From the top, the ICSSR was constructively guided by its early chairmen, who included D R Gadgil and that other fine liberal scholar, M S Gore.

A third difference is that the work of the ICSSR has been far less ideological. The Marxists in the ICHR laboured hard to put forward their interpretations of Indian history while suppressing rival interpretations. By contrast, the work of the ICSSR institutes has been concerned with the social and economic life of contemporary India, with practical questions of health policy, agricultural production, industrial growth, the social implications of development, and the like. This focus on careful empirical research means that both methods and conclusions have been less likely to conform to a prior ideology.

Finally, the academic record of the ICSSR has been altogether more honourable. In terms of both quantity and quality its scholarly output has far exceeded that of its sister institution. Thus the Centre for Development Studies in Thiruvananthapuram has produced an impressive series of books and reports on different aspects of the Kerala 'miracle'. The Madras Institute of Development Studies has done important work on irrigation and land relations. Among the contributions of the Centre for Social Studies in Surat are studies of rehabilitation and of the causes and consequences of plague. The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies has done pioneering research in the sociology of science and on electoral behaviour. Calcutta's Centre for the Studies in Social Sciences has made a mark with its analyses of the political culture of modern Bengal. The faculty of the Institute of Economic Growth have undertaken solid empirical research in the fields of demography, macroeconomic policy, gender and development, water management, and environmental economics.

The record is certainly uneven. There are some centres that are clearly below par. Every centre has its share of permanent faculty who collect their salaries and do little else. But all told, the ICSSR as it existed from 1975 to 1995 (or thereabouts) brought credit to scholarship and to liberal values. Tragically, the distinctions between the ICSSR and the ICHR have been inadequately recognised in the debates sparked by the attempted saffronisation of research institutions. This inability to distinguish between the two in terms of ideology or intellectual quality has been shrewdly seized upon by Murli Manohar Joshi and his ilk. Since the ICHR was manifestly Marxist and unproductive, they insinuate that the ICSSR was Marxist and unproductive too.

Somehow, the terms of the debate have been so set that this conflation of the ICHR and the ICSSR is now taken as axiomatic. I rather suspect that it is not only M M Joshi who has a vested interest in this conflation. So do the Marxist historians who have benefited directly from the mismanagement of the ICHR. As the education minister makes his advance they can raise the cry of 'liberal scholarship in danger'. They seek to ally themselves with the now also-beleaguered ICSSR, to thus build a 'united front' against saffron domination.

However, the BJP is now doing only what the left did earlier: place its own favoured intellectuals in strategic positions of power, using the state in promoting partisan propaganda in the guise of 'history'. One is tempted to suggest that in this respect at least Murli Manohar Joshi is a Leninist. Or at least an Althusserian. He well understands the significance of 'ideological state apparatuses'. He knows that education and culture are the key sites whose commanding heights must be quickly claimed when in power and not easily vacated when out

of power. This is a lesson that he has been taught by the Marxists.

The relation between politics and intellectual work is admittedly a complex one. Should scholars never collaborate with the state or never accept government funds? In a poor country with a parsimonious capitalist class it is only the state that comes forward to support education and research. Even in the rich countries of the north Atlantic world the government has often been the main sponsor of universities and laboratories.

There are no easy answers. But some discriminations are possible. First, one must distinguish between funding and control. State funds are acceptable if they do not interfere with intellectual and institutional autonomy. They are not acceptable if they come with strings attached, where politicians wish to direct the content of curricula, the process of recruitment of students and faculty, or the direction of research.

A second distinction is between expertise and ideology. Scientists and (to a lesser degree) economists tend to think of themselves as non-political 'experts'. Should a soil scientist asked to help the government stem erosion refuse because she or he dislikes the party in power? Should an economist asked to advise on exchange rate stabilisation be dissuaded to accept because of the personality of the finance minister? Perhaps it is possible to identify realms of expertise where politics, in the narrow sense, should not really matter. When a set of focused technical skills are being called upon, there should be little fear of the scholar being morally compromised by working with a state agency.

In a different category fall government assignments in the 'soft' sciences, in anthropology or history for example. Would not a scholar asked to draft a cultural policy for the government be subtly dictated to by the particular idea of India subscribed to by the party in power? Would not a history of India commissioned by the government necessarily involve some trimming to accommodate the particular versions of the past that the minister or his party seek to promote?

In the past, left-wing scholars were willing to serve on government committees that laid down guidelines for text-books or actually wrote them. This they did even when the intentions of the party in power and the education minister were less than honourable. Helping the state write textbooks was then justified on the grounds that it was necessary to combat 'communal' forces. Doubtless those scholars who are now playing along with M M Joshi console themselves that they are helping thwart an 'anti-national' threat.

Fierce political opponents though they may be, intellectuals of red and saffron hues often practise the same methods. Both are willing to use the state as well as specific politicians instrumentally. Both tend to equate scholarly worth and scientific truth with ethnic background or cultural affiliation. A spokesman for the dalit-bahujan intelligentsia has recently claimed that "most of the social anthropological studies done in the post-independence period... operated in defence of the brahminical Hindu spiritual fascism".[14] He reaches this conclusion on the basis of the caste origin of some leading sociologists, rather on a considered examination of their work. This scholar is the ideological mirror image of the saffron ideologue who would dismiss research that is incompatible with his worldview as the product of 'western deracinated intellectuals' or 'pseudo-secularists'.

The intellectuals who adhere to the identity politics of the left and right presume to speak on behalf of larger cultural collectivities: dalits and bahujans in the one case, Hindus in the other. These collectivities are seen as having been historically victimised: by brahmins and other high castes in the one case, by Muslims and other 'foreigners' in the other. Scholars who set themselves up as representatives of the persecuted Hindu or the suffering bahujan are quick to dismiss understandings that diverge from their own as illustrations of bad faith. In contemporary India, intellectual discourse has in this striking respect followed public discourse, namely, that disagreement is increasingly sought to be explained in terms of motivation and ideology, rather than method and evidence.

VI

Who, Now, Is An Indian Liberal?

Some years ago, a friend remarked to me that 'there are only three liberals left in India. These are the sociologist Andre Beteille, the historian Dharma Kumar, and the editor and author George Verghese'. Perhaps he exaggerated the problem. Perhaps by 'India' he actually meant the 'India International Centre'.

Still, there is little question that Indian liberals are an endangered species. They once dominated the intellectual landscape. Over the years, the middle ground they occupied has been rapidly vacated, as younger scholars choose to ally rather with extremities of left and right. The process of polarisation has been aided by the two major controversies of contemporary India: the battle over the Babri masjid in Ayodhya, and the battle over the recommendations of the Mandal Commission.

A properly liberal position would have implied opposition to the Sangh parivar's Ayodhya campaign coupled with opposition to the recommendation of the Mandal Commission. For liberals seek to limit the influence of caste and community on the state and in civil society. They also reject policies that would make individuals – Muslims in one case, upper castes in the other – suffer painfully for injustices that might (or might not) have been committed by their forefathers.

In point of fact, there have been few takers for the anti-mandal, anti-mandir position. Indian scholars and writers divide themselves almost equally into a pro-mandal, anti-masjid camp,

and, on the other side, into an anti-mandal, pro-mandir camp. Some scholars who oppose the demolition of the Babri masjid on the grounds that one cannot right historical wrongs are quite prepared to overlook this principle in the case of Mandal. Other scholars, who argue that the expansion of reservation would affect the functioning of institutions, were nonetheless prepared to silently support the forces of Hindutva, claiming that behind its fanatical facade a movement of national renewal was gathering force. These are then the illiberal banners under which Indian intellectuals have increasingly chosen to march: caste hatred and Hindu pride.[15]

At the height of the Ayodhya and Mandal controversies, circa 1990-92, a whole array of reputable scholars abandoned their liberalism for the blinkered polarities of right or left. I think for example of the late M N Srinivas, who might have been expected to come out more clearly against the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. I think also of Rajni Kothari, who might have been

less willing to hail the expansion of reservation as the harbinger of an exploitation-free Utopia.

Numerous lesser – or lesser-known scholars – have followed Kothari and Srinivas in this flight from liberalism. The left-leaning among them now thinking that poverty has endured because they mistakenly believed that class, rather than caste, has been the chief determinant of social inequality. Atoning hugely for this error, they now hope that reservation, and reservation alone, will transform India. On the other hand, liberals inclined towards nationalism have come to believe that India has stayed backward because it is not, in a cultural sense, united. Only Hinduism, they argue, can provide the glue of unity so necessary for success in the world of competitive nation-states.

Despairing of change through incremental methods, erstwhile liberals have thus found comfort in the methods and rhetoric of extremism. Perhaps they have been pushed to the extremes also by the need to stay 'relevant', to keep in step with now seem to be the dominant politico-intellectual trends in India. These are what I have called 'the identity politics of the left' and "the identity politics of the right". It is between these two tendencies that the younger generation of Indians are asked to choose.

If nothing else, the historical retrospective that I have provided here might explain why there is no portrait of Gokhale displayed in the Senate Hall of the University of Pune. Tilak and Savarkar, as culturally rooted Hindu nationalists, are natural candidates for promotion by the right. Ambedkar and Phule, as organic intellectuals and activist social reformers, fit the bill for the left. Now Gokhale is as considerable a figure as any of the others. But, as a liberal, he has no interest group that is sufficiently strong or organised enough to advance his case

I am not proposing here a naive or simple equivalence between left and right. There is no question here as to which is the greater threat. Golwalkar and Savarkar cannot ever be compared to Ambedkar and Marx. The latter pairing have contributed enormously to intellectual enquiry and social emancipation. The former pairing have contributed largely to the deepening of atavistic prejudice.

Still, an open-minded enquiry cannot ignore the threat to liberalism from either side. For Indian liberals have been steadily squeezed out by the identity politics of the left as well as right. The decline of this once dominant tendency has already affected the quality and temper of public debate. The long-term consequences are worrying. The disappearance of liberal values will mean an erosion of the institutions of civil society, a shrinking of the space for dissent, and a rise in the politics of retribution and revenge. No just means, and certainly no just society either.[16]

Ramachandra Guha's books include *Environmentalism: A global history*, *A Corner of a Foreign Field* and *The Last Liberal and Other Essays*. He is now working on a history of independent India. He can be contacted at ramguha@vsnl.com

Notes

[This essay - it originally appeared in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 15, 2001 - has wholly modest aims. It is suggestive and indicative rather than authoritative and

comprehensive; one person's preliminary sense of what have been some trends and landmarks in the history of intellectual life in India. To quote the late Arvind Narain Das, this is 'a history without footnotes': at any rate, with very few footnotes. Another caveat: what I have to say here is provoked by my reading of social science and history (principally modern history). Disciplines such as Indology and literature lie outside my purview.

This essay was written before the passing away of Dharma Kumar, an outstanding Indian liberal and, to this writer, a friend and companion for 40 years. I dedicate the essay to her memory.]

1. Brelvi, writing in the *Bombay Chronicle*, May 20, 1926, quoted in Milton Israel, *Communications and Power: Propaganda and the Press in the Indian Nationalist Struggle, 1920-1947*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p 239.
 2. Berlin, *The Sense of Reality: Studies in Ideas and their History*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1996, p 260.
 3. D F Karaka, *Betrayal in India*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1950, p 217.
 4. AM, 'Calcutta Diary', *Economic and Political Weekly* (hereafter *EPW*) April 28, 2001. AM's comments can be usefully contrasted with Vidya Pitre, 'Relevance of Gadgil's Economic Thought', *EPW*, July 7, 2001, and especially with the fine tribute printed in *EPW* immediately following Gadgil's death in 1971: V M Dandekar, 'D R Gadgil', *EPW*, May 8, 1971.
 5. Ashok Rudra, *Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis: A Biography*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996. Moreover, a philosophical adherence to Marxism or socialism can happily coexist with personal bossiness. This was true of the great Marx himself, and it has certainly been true of many of his epigones. Indeed, in their attitude to their students and subordinates, some of the most 'feudal' of Indian intellectuals have been Marxists from Bengal.
 6. Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1997, pp 83-84.
 7. The Lucknow school has been ably discussed by T N Madan in his essay-collection, *Pathways: Approaches to the Study of Society in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994. Some of the other trends in Indian scholarship in colonial times will be treated in the volume on the history of sociology and anthropology currently being prepared at the Institute of Economic Growth under the direction of Patricia Uberoi, Satish Deshpande, and Nandini Sundar
- One place where there seems to have been little good scholarship in the humanities before 1947 is south India. This lack awaits further exploration, but I can suggest a working hypothesis: that it was related to the intellectual hegemony of Tamil brahminism, with its penchant for abstract rather than empirical thought, and hence its preference for physics and mathematics over (say) history and economics.
8. Nehru, *An Autobiography: With Musings on Recent Events in India* (first published in 1936: second edition, 1942: reprint, The Bodley Head, London, 1949), p 30.
 9. The rise of intellectual Marxism in India can be traced through the pages of *EPW*. It is my hunch – that awaits testing by more systematic research – that the *Economic Weekly* of the period 1950-1965 would have carried far less explicitly Marxist analysis than the *Economic*

period 1950-1965 would have carried far less explicitly Marxist analyses than the *Economic and Political Weekly* of (say) 1970-1985.

10. I have explored these two sides of Indian Marxism in *An Anthropologist Among the Marxists and Other Essays*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2001.

11. Mukherjee, 'Clio is an Anarchist', *The Telegraph*, February 26, 2000. The ICHR's finest – or at least discreditable – phase was when Ravinder Kumar was its chairman. Unlike the Stalinists who preceded and followed him, Kumar was a liberal who encouraged young and independent-minded scholars.

12. Sen, 'History and the Enterprise of Knowledge', *The Hindu*, January 4, 2001.

13. Nayanjot Lahiri, 'History and Realpolitik', *Hindustan Times*, September 4, 2001, emphasis added. In the same essay, Lahiri also shows how the Marxist practice of labelling thinkers and approaches as 'progressive' and 'reactionary' or 'colonialist' and 'nationalist' has acted as a barrier to historical understanding.

14. Kancha Ilaiah, 'Caste and Race: A Suffocating Nation', paper presented at the Seminar on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, National Law School of India University, Bangalore, August 3, 2001.

15. Here, I would like to underline and affirm Andre Beteille's distinction between reservation as justice and reservation as power. Reservations for the dalits and scheduled tribes are an acknowledgement of horrendous and continuing discrimination, whereas reservation for backward castes is aimed to complement, in the administration, the power they already enjoy in politics and in the agrarian economy. Another point made by Beteille also needs emphasis:

the quantitative extent of reservations. To allocate one-fourth of all jobs in a hospital or all seats in a college on the basis of caste might not seriously affect the institution's functioning; whereas the allocation of half and two-thirds of jobs and seats is more likely to. See Beteille, *Chronicles of Our Time*, Penguin India, New Delhi, 2000.




In this context, it is not commonly known that Ambedkar himself wanted reservations for a strictly limited time period. He would hardly have approved of the now almost-maniac desire to make reservations permanent, or to extend them to all kinds of groups and to newer and newer spheres (such as the private sector).

16. For comments on an earlier draft I am grateful to Rukun Advani, Alka Malwade Basu, Kaushik Basu, Andre Beteille, Madhav Gadgil, Sujata Guha, Mukul Kesavan, Sunil Khilnani, Nayanjot Lahiri, Pratap Mehta, and Jedediah Purdy. Doubtless many loose ends remain, and I will be grateful for any critical responses, which can be sent to me at ramguha@vsnl.com

Also See: The author's more recent article which develops these ideas further: [Double Defeat](#)

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15/D-15

Ghulam faruki:

JAN 30, 2006
12:15 AM

You are absolutely right that liberalism has been a very fertile source of progress and humanitarianism. That is why you and Islam decided to have nothing to do with it.

THOMAS NILE
LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

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14/D-16

>If the liberal happens to be a Muslim, some folks >would closely follow his posts to find an early >opportunity to label him an "apologist".

JAN 29, 2006
12:14 AM

Shame on you Ghulam for thinking that you get labeled an apologist because you happen to have a Muslim name. People are judged by their behaviour, and on this forum, by their posts. If you fancy yourself as a liberal, I am sorry to say your posts betray that claim.

AJIT TENDULKAR
SEATTLE, UNITED STATES

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13/D-20

This is a scholarly and very thoughtful article by Ramachandra Guha. It is true that liberals are an endangered species. In Bush's America, "liberal" has become a dirty word. Marxist as well as BJP circles in India would consider liberals as being wooly-eyed and lacking hard-nosed thinking. Even in this forum, epithets such as "pseudo-sec" or "commie" would be freely hurled at anyone advocating a liberal position. If the liberal happens to be a Muslim, some folks would closely follow his posts to find an early opportunity to label him an "apologist". It is a pity because liberalism has throughout history been a fertile ground for humanitarianism, arts and progress.

JAN 28, 2006
12:13 AM

GHULAM Y FARUKI
NEW YORK, UNITED STATES

[PERMALINK](#) | [LIKE \(1\)](#) | [DISLIKE \(0\)](#) | [REPORT ABUSE](#)

12/D-21

English media is surely the biggest convert missionaries have made. Unaware and many times even caught not listening to the other point of views, Media, over a period of time, has gone dumb, deaf and blind to the inherent dangers of the exploitative nature of the mass

APR 11, 2004
12:12 AM

conversions and its ill effect on the Indian society as a whole. Media, in its usual charge against Hindus for not being tolerant enough to remain indifferent to the plight of their fellow countrymen lured by money or muscle into Christianity with rest of the Hindu society left to bleed, often argue that despite Islamic invasions and British colonialism, number of converts has not increased proportionately and attribute this phenomenon solely to the tolerant nature of Islamic rulers and noble hearted Christian Missionaries who had only welfare of the Hindu society in mind. Is it as simple as it looks? First, Islamic invasion wasn't as bloodless as it is often cited. It can be easily summarized in the words of American Historian Will Durant "The Mohammadan conquest of India is probably the bloodiest story in the history". It was only due to the sacrifices of several well known and unaccounted number of unknowns to maintain and preserve the cultural and spiritual integrity of the Hindu society, it could remain in its present form. Based on several references available from Islamic and non Islamic sources, the forcibly converted people were brought back into the Hindu fold once situations improved. Secondly, the number of Christians in India hasn't gone up as apologists often point out, is an absurdity at its best. Christian missionaries came to India in sixteenth century with the Catholic Portuguese. History is replete with incidents of bloody conflicts and forced conversions. A century later, Protestant Christian nations of Europe came to India but they didn't have any proselytizing mission and in fact, the English East India Company were prohibited from sending out missionaries by a clause in their charter. However, in early nineteenth century missionaries in England started putting up enormous amount of pressure in support of sending Evangelical mission to India. This encountered stiff opposition from several quarters and culminated into two differing schools of thoughts. It can be easily summed up in the words of a tea-dealer Mr. Twinning, "As long as we continue to govern India in the mild, tolerant spirit of Christianity, we may govern it with ease; but if ever the fatal day should arrive, when religious innovation shall set her foot in that country, indignation will spread from one end of the Hindustan to the other, and the arms of fifty millions of people will drive us from that portion of the globe, with as much ease as the sand of the desert is scattered by the wind". Another point of view in support of that policy was by Montgomery. "Christianity had nothing to teach Hinduism, and no missionary ever made a really good Christian convert in India. He was more anxious to save the 30,000 of his country-men in India than to save the souls of all the Hindu by making them Christians at so dreadful a price". Any attack on Hindu interests seldom draws any attention from the media and if it does, is often described as 'complete falsehood' or reporters make it absolutely sure that the words like 'alleged' or 'claimed to' are used even in cases like carnage of minority Hindus in Kashmir.

MISS CHANDRAMUKHI SONKAR
RAMPUR (UTTAR PRADESH), INDIA

[PERMALINK](#) | [LIKE \(1\)](#) | [DISLIKE \(0\)](#) | [REPORT ABUSE](#)

11/D-13

APR 05, 2004
12:11 AM

I am grateful to Mr.Guha for this essay. Not being a scholar of history or sociology, it is useful to have some guidance on how to read - or rather how not to be misled by - the authorities in these fields. I am referring specifically to the use of particular versions of history in current political debates that are polarized along the lines of caste or religion.

In this regard, I find particularly valuable the author's stating of a problem I have encountered in public but also more private discourse about for instance, the Godhra tragedy. While all my discussions have involved people who can all agree that as human beings what happened there was brutal, the discussions that follow are often thorny ones wherein the discussants often enagage in what Mr.Guha highlights: "disagreement is increasingly sought to be explained in terms of motivation and ideology, rather than method and evidence." In my professional life as a physician I am used to debates where motivations (financial for example) and ideology are in question, but there is an important and welcome difference in my professional discussions, which is this: we all agree that what should really be at stake here is evidence and methodology (even if it is explored imperfectly). In discussions about political and historical issues however, it seems to me more common that there is not this agreement, rather the stakes are really about ones' ideology, national 'pride' or lack thereof etc.

An excellent tonic, this essay.

VINOD SRIHARI
NEW HAVEN, USA

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